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25 FEBRUARY 1965

MEMORANDUM

To Holders of

NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

NUMBER 4-2-64

NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

NUMBER 31-64

Likelihood of Indian Development of Nuclear Weapons

Submitted by the
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

Concurred in by the
UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

As indicated overleaf
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The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of this estimate:

The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Defense, AEC and NSA.

Concurring:

Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State

Director, Defense Intelligence Agency

The Atomic Energy Commission Representative to the USIB

Director of the National Security Agency

Abstaining:

The Assistant to the Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, the subject being outside of his jurisdiction.

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MEMORANDUM TO HOLDERS OF:

NIE 4-2-64:

PROSPECTS FOR A PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS
OVER THE NEXT DECADE, dated 21 October 1964

NIE 31-64:

THE PROSPECTS FOR INDIA, dated 10 December 1964

LIKELIHOOD OF INDIAN DEVELOPMENT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

1. Despite the October 1964 Communist Chinese explosion, the Indian Government has publicly reaffirmed its intent not to produce nuclear weapons. In addition, the Congress Party, at Shastri's behest, formally adopted a statement of policy against the production of such weapons. Moreover, the Indian Government has recently acknowledged to the Canadians that they had originally agreed that the Canadian-Indian Reactor—the only one presently capable of producing plutonium—should be used only for peaceful purposes. On the other hand, domestic pressures to build nuclear weapons have increased considerably since the Chinese detonation.

2. India can proceed with a number of the steps which are prerequisites to a weapons program without making a firm decision to develop nuclear weapons. It is probably now producing small quantities of plutonium metal, which could be used in the planned reactor program but also would be needed in a weapons program. Its atomic energy organization and its military establishment are big enough to absorb such activities as development of weapons designs and the necessary electronics. It could delay its final decision on the making of weapons for about a year, and could still have its first weapon at

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about the same time as if such a decision were made now. There is some evidence that the Indian Government has decided to proceed with work preliminary to a weapons program, and we believe this is the course which it will follow during the next year or so.

3. Indian policy over the longer run will depend on a number of factors. Important considerations will include the pace and scope of the Chinese program, the nature of Chinese policy, and the impact which the Indians consider that China's actions have on India's prestige and political position. If the Chinese carry out a vigorous test program and appear to be moving successfully toward an operational weapons capability, and if they continue their truculent foreign policy, the pressures within India for a weapons program will grow stronger. The Indian Government will continue to seek international agreement on nonproliferation and, more importantly, on arms control in order to reduce the Chinese threat. It is not optimistic that such agreements can be reached soon, if at all, and meanwhile its policy decisions will be influenced by its prospects for obtaining assurances of protection from the US, the USSR, and the UK, and the degree of confidence which it places in any such assurances.

4. The Indian Government is concerned with the cost of a nuclear weapons program and of an adequate delivery system. However, we do not believe costs will be the decisive element in India's decision. India has increased its annual defense budget fourfold—to nearly \$2 billion—in the last eight years, and, in the course of the next several years, could undertake a modest weapons program and probably acquire a more advanced aircraft delivery system with only a moderate increase in its defense budget. India might indeed, during the next decade, be able to acquire, at an acceptable cost, a missile delivery system suitable to carry the warheads it could manufacture. The Indians regard their country as a potential if not actual great power, and when faced with disputes in the past their policy has been to build up their military strength.

5. We cannot estimate with confidence how the various internal and external factors will interact to determine India's ultimate course. However, we believe that unless the Indian Government considers that it has international guarantees which adequately protect its security, the chances are better than even that within the next several years India will decide to develop nuclear weapons.

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